



Sowerby Bridge Development Board
Minutes of the meeting held 26th September 2023
St Paul's Methodist Church, Sowerby Bridge

Board members present.

Councillor Adam Wilkinson (Chair)
Celia Cullen (Vice Chair)
Councillor Dot Foster
Councillor Ashton
Councillor Sarah Courtney
Sam Irvine
Sheila Eastwood
Phill Hawdon
Lauren Brundell
Stephen Priestley

Also, in attendance

Richard Seaman
Mary Farrar
Craig Broadwith
Karen Hornby
Rob Shipway
Zakariya Ali

1. Welcome and introductions.

The Chair welcomed Board members and officers to the meeting.

The Chair thanked Craig Whittaker from Historic England, Karen Hornby from the Community Rail Partnership, and Mary Farrar from Calderdale's Highways team for their attendance to deliver updates and reports.

a. Apologies.

Sarah Fanthorpe, Janice Dawson, and Darren Thomas submitted their apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the last meeting.

Subject to correction of a typing error (replacing 'Trinity' with 'Triangle'), the minutes of the meeting held 25th July 2023 were approved as a true record. It was also noted that Phil Hawdon had not attended the July meeting and that his apologies should be recorded in the amended July minutes.

Action: ZA to amend the minutes of the July meeting and add to the Sowerby Bridge Board webpage.

4. Matters Arising.

RS noted concerns raised by the Board at its July meeting regarding signage in the town. Following the meeting he had contacted partners from Active Calderdale, Historic England, and Community Rail Partnership to discuss how these concerns might be addressed. Partners were exploring options outlined later in the meeting.

5. Calder Valley Rail Partnership

Karen Hornby, from the Community Rail Partnership (CRP), presented an overview of the function of the Community Rail Partnership and its work in Calderdale. She then led a discussion on how the CRP and Sowerby Bridge Development Board could work together to support regeneration of the town.

Karen stated that the primary objective of the CRP is to collaborate with partners to promote investment in the railway system to boost passenger numbers. This will bring environmental benefits through reduced traffic, and economic benefits by opening towns such as Sowerby Bridge to more visitors. The CRP can also collaborate with local community groups to bring social benefits. She highlighted work the CRP is delivering with Calderdale Hornets to tackle antisocial behaviour.

Karen had previously circulated copies of a new leaflet which is being distributed across the North West promoting the Calder Line. The leaflet encourages visits to the town, highlighting how accessible the town is Greater Manchester and Leeds. Potential visitors to the town are encouraged by CRP highlighting the town's attractions. She also identified joint promotional opportunities between the Board and CRP to raise awareness of events for example. The Board noted that once the new station in Elland opens, the 6 major towns in Calderdale will be linked together, as well as to Leeds and Manchester. T

The Board discussed opportunities which could be explored with CRP. These included Ghost Walks. Karen highlighted tentative discussions underway with RS and the Council's regeneration team to explore improvements to signage in the town and at the Railway station.

ACTION: ZA to invite Karen to any meetings which will focus on events.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked Karen for her presentation.

6. HAZ Programme Update

RS provided an update to the Board on progress of the HAZ programme. The focus of work for 2022/23 is the Shop Front Grant Scheme which was presented to the Board in January 2023 and has been discussed at Board meetings since. The scheme offers grants of up to 80% of eligible costs toward improvements to shop facades.

RS reported that contractors had been appointed to deliver the work and that once landowners had signed their contracts and paid deposits for the work on their properties, work can commence. Work will take part in two phases – phase one

property audit by the contractor, and phase two delivery of works between January and March 2024.

RS noted that its last meeting, the Board expressed concern about the poor condition of signage from the railway station to and throughout the town centre. Issues included poor maintenance, such as the signs at the entrance to the lock basin, and signage that had been vandalised such as finger pointers turned to the wrong direction. RS reported that because of the Board's concerns he had met with colleagues from Historic England, CRP, Active Calderdale, and the Council's Highways and Leisure teams to discuss how signage might be improved. RS reported that the group had agreed to explore the potential for investment in new and improved signage to and throughout the town centre.

MF (Calderdale Highways) highlighted the works planned for the new Sowerby Bridge Square offered a chance for new signage and information points. The Board discussed other ways signage might be used to support the town's economy, such as using QR codes to encourage walking across the town to points of interest.

CC highlighted the difficulties for visitors to the town navigating their way from the station to the town centre and to other points of interest, RS confirmed that this issue would be included in any investment in new or improved signage in the town.

7. Shop Front Grant Scheme

RS updated the Board on progress for the ongoing Shop Front Grant Scheme (SFGS). The contractor has now been appointed and legal contracts being finalised with property owners taking part in the project, Key issues are timescale – the need to complete works by end of March 2024. Regarding the Olive Branch, RS confirmed negotiations were ongoing to restore the heritage signage which had been partly obscured with black paint.

Cllr Foster asked if there was an opportunity to address the balcony of the former batch shop, which had developed a bulge and appeared in danger of collapse. CC asked if highways could intervene to ensure the pathway was safe for pedestrians, or whether grant support might be offered to support removal and improving the front of the store.

Action Richard Seaman to seek feedback from Council planning / enforcement.

RS reported that grant support had been agreed to the property 30 Wharf Street to complete works and remove the plywood cover on the front of the building.

8. End of Programme Celebrations

RS reported that in conjunction with Calderdale year of culture he had secured £1500 for the Board to help support community led events in 2024. CB noted the opportunity to combine these with funds from the current HAZ programme to put in place a programme of events to celebrate HAZ, the achievements on the High Street, and promote the role of the Board in supporting community activity. RS suggested the Board establish an 'events panel,' to bring together Bard members and other interested parties to explore opportunities for community events to

coincide with the end of HAZ (March to June 2024) and to celebrate the Calderdale Year of Culture 2024.

MF noted the opportunity to link the events to the newly opened Sowerby Bridge Square expected Spring 2024.

ACTION: RS to circulate email around for anyone interested in joining an events panel and arrange a meeting

Looking ahead, CB suggested the HAZ events could be used to promote further opportunities to fund improvements in Sowerby Bridge. By demonstrating what can be achieved it would be possible to make the case for further investment elsewhere, although HAZ funding will not be extended.

MF noted the need to identify remaining proposals in the existing masterplan and RS noted opportunities for the Board to work together to identify smaller, complementary projects to support voluntary groups. He noted that in Elland and Hebden Bridge the Boards were embarking on workshops to create an updated vision for their towns, identifying opportunities.

CC asked if the proposed events would centre on Sowerby Bridge or whether there was an opportunity to support activity in Copley and Triangle. RS noted that HAZ funding was restricted but that the £1500 was for the Board to use as it saw fit.

SI noted the opportunity to get young people engaged more in heritage to improve their understanding of the town and its history. He suggested guided walks and RS noted this was one of the potential benefits of the signage project, which could be used for such walks, or other activities such as 'Ghost Walks.' Other towns use these events to promote health and wellbeing, community participation, and encourage people to eat, drink, and make use of town centre facilities.

9. Highways Update

Mary Farrar presented a report on progress of CIP project.

Action: RS to attach a copy of the presentation to the minutes of the meeting.

SI asked about work on Wharf Street and if there was a timetable and if the street would be closed. MF committed to updating the Board when confirmed.

Councillor Foster asked for an email from MF as soon as possible confirming a timetable for the proposed crossings.

Councillor Ashton expressed concern that surfacing works at King Cross have not been finished in front of the fire station.

LB asked of works extended to the West end of the area, but MF was cautious that this could be delivered.

MF confirmed data will be updated and published once reviewed.

10. Active Calderdale

RS reported that the proposals for Active Calderdale were being developed with a planned community workshop to be confirmed.

Action: RS to circulate details of the community event when available.

RS reported that the Active Calderdale officer would attend the next meeting of the Board to provide feedback on the event. He confirmed that £80,000 was available to support activities promoting walking, cycling and other similar activities in ways identified by the community. She had already met local stakeholders suggested by the Board such as Stephen Priestley to visit local trails.

11.Improved Board Delivery

RS reported that the Council was reviewing the future management of the Boards. He noted that while there had been positive steps in Board recruitment, with all Boards now at or near capacity, there was still room for improvement particularly on managing the webpages – ensuring timely submission of minutes.

RS noted the remaining funds for the Board from Ambition for Towns and asked the Board for their views on how this should be managed. He noted the different approaches by Boards but that as the funding for each Board has reduced, two Boards are focusing on developing business plans in the hope of using funding to attract further funds. This had ensured Board members had a better focus for their work and the Board agreed to discuss this further at the next Board meeting.

Action: RS to bring a report to the next Board on proposals for an approach to developing a business plan for the Sowerby Bridge Development Board.

MF noted the opportunity to use this work to review and refresh the current masterplan, with the business plan identifying complementary opportunities. CC agreed that a refresh for the masterplan was needed and that the involvement of the Board was important. She asked if this would include the whole of the Board area. RS noted that while the masterplan would focus on the centre of Sowerby Bridge, the wider business plan could incorporate the wider area. He noted that work had already been conducted to identify resident wishes in these areas and they might be used to inform such work.

12. Old Cawsey

Councillor Wilkinson outlined progress on works at Old Cawsey, a key part of the town centre. He identified it as an opportunity area for development. PH noted the potential role of Fire and Water, and that plans were being explored although there was work still to do to define design and determine costs. Cllr Wilkinson asked that this form part of the proposed business plan works.

13.Any other business

No other business.

14.Date and Venue of next meeting.

The next meeting of the Board will be held 28th November, commencing 6.00 pm. RS asked Board members to signpost the Town's team to a venue for future meetings that could provide a permanent home for Board business.

Action: ZAK to explore alternative meeting rooms.